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There has been a great deal of discussion about the concept of identification in the philosophical literature on empathy and narrative identification (Carroll, 1991). On the one hand, identification seems to be a critical aspect of our folk understanding of what it is to engage with a narrative fiction. On the other hand, for a range of reasons, our engagement with narrative fictions seems quite distinct from our folk concept of identification. In particular, our responses to the events depicted in narrative contexts are not consistent with the depicted experiences of characters. Simulation theory has been proposed as a means to resolve this putative inconsistency (Goldman, 2006). Simulation theory suggests that we understand aspects of a narrative from a first person perspective, but that doing so does not necessarily involve projecting ourselves into, or identifying with the phenomenal aspects of, the experiences of characters. Although promising as a strategy, simulation theory runs into the same type of problem as identification: our psychological perspective when we engage with narrative fictions seems quite different from the first person perspectives of characters. In what follows I would like to pick up on an idea first proposed in Seeley (2010). Recent research demonstrates that motor simulation plays a critical role in our ability to understand actions in ordinary contexts and that the role of motor simulation in action understanding generalizes to narrative understanding in both literary and pictorial contexts. Motor simulations are effector specific, they involve the activation of discrete areas of premotor cortex which code for the movement of discrete muscle groups involved in planning and preparation for specific actions (Witt & Proffitt, 2008). These processes facilitate directing attention and orienting our bodies to task specific features in the environment. In third person contexts we use these same processes to direct attention and track the movements of others. However, we do not so much put ourselves in their shoes as we put ourselves in their effectors. We simulate only those aspects of their anticipated movements necessary to the information demands of the current task. Objections to simulation theory rest on the observation that the information available form the global perspective of narrative consumers is broader, and in some cases inconsistent with the information available from the local perspectives of characters. If we simulate the experience of a character in this context we will miss some of the global information. However, if we simulate only the effector specific information necessary understand the actions and motivation of characters these problems do not arise. In this paper we propose an effector specific model for a simulation theory of narrative understanding, discuss the relationship between this model and recent research in cognitive neuroscience which demonstrates that the premotor areas involved in motor preparation, action observation, and motor simulation play a role in the comprehension of action sentences (Fisher & Zwaan, 2008) and more generally our understanding of actions depicted in literary contexts (Speer, Reynolds, Swallow, & Zacks, 2009), and the implications of our model and this research for philosophical discussions of empathy and identification in narrative contexts.

Bibliography:
Have you ever been reading a book and then realized that you haven’t actually processed any of the information on the last few pages you’ve read? If so, you’re definitely not alone! The good news is that reading comprehension is something you can get better at just by trying some simple tricks and making a few changes to the way you read, and we’re here to show you how.

Maybe you’re stuck at a description of the Battle of Gettysburg in an American History textbook. Write a timeline listing the start, major turning points, and end of the battle. Next to the timeline, note how each phase of the battle shifted the advantage to one side or the other. Find a good spot for reading. Avoiding distractions will help you stay focused on your book. Choose someplace away from the TV. In another tradition (common in psychology and sociology), personal narrative encompasses long sections of talk extended accounts of lives in context that develop over the course of single or multiple interviews. Investigators’ definitions of narrative lead to different methods of analysis, but all require them to construct texts for further analysis, that is, select and organise documents, compose FIELD NOTES. Gareth Williams (1984), in an early paper in the illness narrative genre, shows how individuals manage the assault on identity that accompanies rheumatoid arthritis by narratively reconstructing putative causes an interpretive process that connects the body, illness, self, and society. A narrative, story or tale is any account of a series of related events or experiences, whether nonfictional (memoir, biography, news report, documentary, travelogue, etc.) or fictional (fairy tale, fable, legend, thriller, novel, etc.). Narratives can be presented through a sequence of written or spoken words, still or moving images, or any combination of these. The word derives from the Latin verb narrare (to tell), which is derived from the adjective gnarus (knowing or skilled). Along with